

Is Fragile Woman a Sex Delusion?

Or, as Dr. Anna L. Brown Holds, Is She, Like the Amazon, Strong as a Man?



The Cave Woman

Through the ages there have been clinging vines and sturdy oaks among the "weaker sex." The artist here has depicted outstanding figures in the succession.

The Amazonian



The Victorian



The Pagan Camp

The Modern Athletic Type



1919-Fifth Avenue

girl babies die less easily than boys—and at the other end of the scale there are more old ladies. They can bear large families and yet live longer.

Endurance
"Men have the advantage when

in athletics. But women have the advantage in endurance in connection with some moderate effort. One recommends a man for moving a piano. A man can run faster, jump higher or throw a ball further, but a woman can dance longer. And when it comes to the rub-a-dub-dub on a washboard, which is real work but does not require great strength, a healthy woman could keep at it hours longer than a football player or a circus strong man. A woman could probably play a piano longer each day and more hours each week without a breakdown in health than a man."

In passing from the field of expert to lay testimony, the opinion of Mrs. Noble McConnell, 104 West Seventieth Street, society and club woman and colonel of the Women's Police Reserves, was solicited.

More Sensible Now

"As to whether woman ever will be, or aspires to be, the physical equal of man, I cannot say," said Mrs. McConnell. "But I do believe that woman is more sensible of her physical welfare now than she ever has been. She is wearing common sense clothes, and there are more women playing tennis and golf and motor-ing and flying now than there ever have been. The small waist has gone permanently. Everything tends toward the upbuilding of woman's strength, with the retention of the grace and daintiness for which the American girl is famed."

Place for Each

To Mrs. William M. Haradon, of 215 West Ninety-fifth Street, no physical millennium for woman appears imminent, nor does she believe that woman wishes to meet man in business life on the basis of physical equality.

"Woman's place is not altogether in the home," she said, "but her home duties combined with those for which the war taught her she is fitted make up a combination which, if well done, is sufficient to any woman. Personally, I hope women never will have to show the same strength as men. They can each occupy different planes the more advantageously. There are little things around a house that a man never could be trusted to accomplish, and there are in all married lives big, important moments which are better met by the man. It strikes me that it is no more necessary for woman to encroach upon that ground which we have come to regard as belonging to the male than it is for man to invade some pet dominion of woman. Both have their place, so why not keep it?"

By Louis Lee Arms

IS THE belief that woman is physically weaker than man a delusion of sex?

Dr. Anna L. Brown, chairman of the programme committee of the International Conference of Women Physicians, thinks such is the case. So do others. She says:

"The whole relation of women to the marriage problem and to the economic and social problems of the day is to a certain extent a problem of health, for women too often believe themselves physically unequal to independent economic life and so submit to unhappy marriages.

"Even in the business world women are the victims of their own delusions. They cling to the antiquated idea that they are less strong than men, and so meekly accept smaller salaries and less responsible positions, feeling that their health is not equal to the demands of higher positions.

"Even when a woman knows from her own personal experience that she is just as strong as a man, she cannot enforce her rights because of the delusions of 'weaker sisters' all about her. We must make women physically strong before we can solve the problems of modern industrial, political and social life."

In a paper read before the conference she said further:

"The fact remains that women are proverbial sinners against health. Their traditional and acquired attitude of mind toward health is one of assumption that as women they are entitled to special consideration on every kind of pretext.

"From the days of chivalry, when knights placed their ladies on pedestals for knightly worship and went forth to do valiant deeds with all the greater freedom, the conception of woman as the weaker vessel has been soundly lodged in women's minds, and none the less in men's minds, and this in spite of the fact that through all the ages women have performed huge tasks of endeavor and endurance without physical detriment."

Does She Will It?

Is it not, then, that woman is weaker because she so wills?

Mythology, history and modern science attempt to answer.

There were in the days of the classic ancients the Amazonians. The Amazon was tall as Jim Jeffries, swift as Tom Longboat and warlike as a mate for Mars. She mainly practised two arts, which in primitive culture always have been man's. These are fighting and hunting.

She sent expeditionary forces to

iam Johnston at tennis; the Barnard College basketball five would be slaughtered by Yale; Charlotte Boyle is brilliantly fast in the water; yet Norman Ross can outswim her; "Chick" Evans would have to give many strokes to Alexa Stirling, and so on, assuming that in each of these events the element of courtesy were eliminated.

On the other hand, when it comes to "stirring a cake" much is to be said for Martha as against Henry; and in the matter of bending over a washtub Mrs. John Smith is alleged to knock the spots off her husband.

This is important, for it is primitive testimony as well as modern. Let man boast not too much of his physical superiority. He is faster afoot, addicted to war and attains the stature of the heroic in many muscular instances; yet in the matter of industrial arts woman ever has been his superior. Those tasks which require endurance rather than muscularity are painstakingly done by woman, where man wilts.

Every soldier or sailor who, when he was in uniform, peeled potatoes or washed dishes, as a member of the "K. P." or scrubbed floors and polished windows, when assigned to the work squad, will probably be willing to agree that the wonder that women could do these tasks uncomplainingly day after day was the only sensation that exceeded his distaste for such duties. On this proposition we should anticipate nothing less than a unanimous vote.

Comparisons

In "Man and Woman" Havelock Ellis sets forth some comparative sex data that may well be examined before passing into the speculative field of the physical future of woman. He says:

"A man hunts, spears fish, fights and sits about," said an Australian Kurnai once; the rest is woman's work. This may be accepted as a fair statement of the sexual division of labor among very primitive peoples. It is a division of labor which is altogether independent of race and climate. Among the Esquimaux, in their snowhouses on the opposite side of the globe, there is the same division of labor as among the Australians. The tasks which demand a powerful development of muscle and bone, and the resulting capacity for intermittent spurts of energy, involving corresponding periods of rest, fall to the man; the care of the children and all the various industries which radiate from the hearth

and call for an expenditure of energy more continuous, but at a lower tension, fall to the woman.

"The militant belongs to men; the industrial to women. The man undergoes the fatigue of hunting, and when he has thrown the game at a woman's feet his work is done; it is her part to carry it and to cook it, as well as to make the vessels in which the food is placed. The skins and the refuse are hers to utilize, and all the industries connected with clothing are chiefly in her hands."

Citing the fact that in Europe men and women work and are educated side by side, Ellis says:

"Such conditions have tended to remove artificial sex differences, and have largely obliterated the coarser signs of superiority, which may be fore have been possessed by one sex over another."

The female is not only the founder of industrial arts, but it is a fact that at certain ages she is physically the superior, as witness:

"In Great Britain girls grow more rapidly than boys between the ages of ten and fifteen; and at the ages of eleven and a half to fourteen and a half they are actually taller, and between the ages of twelve and a half and fifteen and a half actually heavier than boys at

the same age. The acceleration in the growth of girls seems to be coincident with a retardation in the growth of boys. At the age of fifteen boys again take the lead, growing at first rapidly and then more slowly, and their complete growth is attained practically about the age of twenty-three. Girls, on the other hand, grow very slowly after the age of sixteen and attain their full stature about the twentieth year. Both in Europe and the United States the year of most active growth appears in boys to be the sixteenth, in girls the thirteenth or (as in Sweden) the fourteenth."

The trend of scientific opinion tends to support the proposition that woman is not physically the inferior of man, and the diversity of her talents more than offsets the high tension muscularity of the male. Yet school and industrial statistics in the matter of sickness indicate that this parity is more apparent than real.

Sickness for Advantage

Dr. Kristine Mann, of 251 West 100th Street, offers a reason for this actual inferiority.

"Woman," she says, "takes very little responsibility for her health.

She is not ashamed of being sick. On the contrary, she regards it somewhat as a privilege, for it insures her a day off when she could not get a day off to prevent that very sickness. Around the house sickness becomes a compelling power as an actual weapon against her husband, family, etc. She will be weaker than man until she changes her attitude toward health. It is difficult to say when that time will come. It probably will be thousands of years hence.

"As it stands now, woman must radically change her training if she is to be efficient in industry or as a mother and homemaker. First, she must do things that increase the opportunities for making health. It happens in New York that this is extremely difficult. In the boroughs of Manhattan and The Bronx there are fewer than ten swimming pools restricted to women and there is no public gymnasium for their use. "She must exercise systematically and take a real interest in her health. To do this she must abandon high-heeled shoes. For every fallen arch imputed to low heels there are hundreds of physically unfit women in New York whose condition primarily may be laid to the fact that they do not get sufficient exercise, indeed cannot, in high heels. High heels are a greater scourge than corseting."

Environment

Dr. Holmes C. Jackson, professor of physiology at New York University, agrees that woman has not developed her physical possibilities.

"Potentially," he declared, "woman is as strong as man. Her failings are largely environmental. It is conceivable that man under the conditions which women have lived under for hundreds of years would deteriorate physically until woman would be his muscular equal. In fact, she would be his superior if during the time he abandoned sports and labor that he build up his physical being she took them up. It would take many years to bring this about, but it is altogether in the realm of possibility.

"So far as her physical condition is concerned woman has long taken an erroneous view. She gives up too easily to imaginary illness. In time the counterfeit takes on the look of the real. All of us know such women. They may believe that they belong in bed at least once a month; oftentimes more. Other women go about business with the same view-

point toward physical condition as men. These are in the majority and are proof that the normal condition of woman might be much the same as man's.

"Trained correctly and her environment altered, woman in a few generations could play football, baseball and other games with quite the same facility as man. But probably she never will do this. Personally, I hope not. Yet that she has greatly weakened herself physically is due entirely to her fallacious point of view in regard to muscular condition and health. Potentially she is the equal of man."

In Business

Dr. M. J. Fein, pathologist at the Broad Street Hospital and until recently associated with a pathological unit in the medical service of the United States army, disagrees with the theory that women ever will become the industrial equals of men.

"Facts will not bear out Dr. Anna L. Brown," he declared. "The nervous system of woman is unstable and she cannot stand the strain of continuous worry that executive ability requires. Woman does not correctly estimate the nature of man. A study of business institutions will prove that the percentage of women who year in and year out stand the strain required by executive ability is very small.

"In our experience during the war we found that while women proved competent workers they were not qualified to lead and this experience would warrant the belief that this is a normal condition."

Carl Easton Williams, editor of "Physical Culture," is not so sure of man's immutable superiority. He says:

"It is not true that 'the female of the species is more deadly than the male' so far as humans are concerned. She is more lively; not more deadly. It is not true that woman is the weaker vessel because she is smaller and more daintily built. A man has more bulk, more bone and, therefore, develops more beef, more muscle, to be able to move and handle this excess of bone. Of course, being bigger, man is superior muscularly.

"But a man's superiority in strength is muscular, not vital or functional. The woman's is the more vital organism. Think of the tax of maternity. To begin with,